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SPRING, No. 63, BY L. H. MEAKIN

## THE EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY MR. L. H. MEAKIN IN CINCINNATI

[Owing to the illness of Mr. L. H. Meakin, and the death of Mr. Julius Dexter, late treasurer of the Cincinnati Museum Association, we are disappointed in not being able to give our readers an extended review of Mr. Meakin's exhibition, which was so enthusiastically received by the art-lovers of his city. Mr. J. H. Gest, who was to write the article, has been so occupied by added duties that we are obliged to make a few quotations from the press reviews and the preface to the catalogue furnished by the artist himself. The exhibition will be transferred soon to St. Louis and possibly to other cities.—Ed.]

Under the caption "Foreword by the Artist," Mr. Meakin has written some exceedingly interesting matter. It is well worth careful perusal and deliberate study, for it tells some modern, up-to-date facts:

"When an artist who uses ink instead of pigment—in other words an author—presents a work or a collection of works for the consideration of the public, it is a common custom to write a preface or introduction, in which he endeavors to bespeak the interest of his audience and to pave the way for a sympathetic consideration of what he has to offer; to give reasons, perhaps, for having done this or that, and to apologize, maybe, for shortcomings for which he probably more keenly than any one else is conscious.

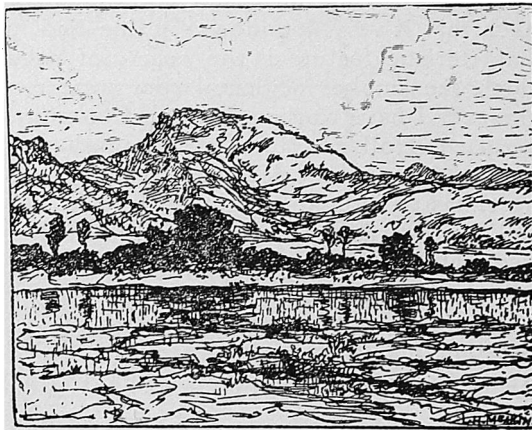
"It seems to me, therefore, that an artist painter, as they would say in almost any language but English, is equally justified in introducing his own personality to the extent of saying something that may bring about a better understanding of his aims.

"Artists are handicapped, to a certain extent, by convention and tradition. They are often criticised to-day because they do not con-

fine themselves to following closely in the footsteps of the great and even some of the small painters of the past, notwithstanding that one element of the greatness of all the masters, old and modern, is the fact that they did not follow slavishly in the track of their predecessors, but found, each one, a pathway for himself. There is no doubt that we would be in a bad way did we not have them to refer to and lean upon, but it should be remembered that every artist, whether in poetry, painting, music, or any form of art, must have a song of his own to sing, or he has no claim to the title. Art, to have value, must be individual and creative. The oft-repeated quotation, "art is nature seen through a temperament," is, or at least contains, a great truth.

"Our pictures, realistic or otherwise, no matter how conscientious they may be in the recording of facts, are the impressions we gather from nature—not nature itself, or to be mistaken for it—and their artistic value, assuming that there is an adequate technical knowledge, depends on the mental quality of the artist. If the mind is commonplace and material it will be that aspect of nature that will be most in evidence in the picture, no matter how much executive skill the artist may possess. It is, in fact, sometimes unfortunate that in painting the representation or imitation of natural objects plays so important a part, the result of which is that the sentiment of nature, the thought or even the decorative value, that goes to make up the "raison d'être" of a picture, is often more or less lost sight of by the observer in looking to see in how far the artist has succeeded in the literal presentation of each particular object, thus mistaking the means for the end.

"Whether I have found a song in nature loud enough to be heard above the hum of everyday life, and, if heard, whether it is worth listening to, is a question that cannot be decided by myself. I have always the hope, however, that something of the varied impressions made upon me by the different moods and aspects of nature may be felt by the observers of my pictures, and I have endeavored to render in each, as well as I could, the artistic truths that



FOOTHILLS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS. No. 2

impressed me as the most valuable and characteristic of the time and place.

"An artist makes many experiments and is uncertain at the time just what value they may possess, or in how far they may convey to others the sentiments of nature with which he was impressed and which he has attempted to record. Fortunately for art the artist's nature, and by that I mean all kinds of nature, animate and inanimate, has many aspects. In Colorado, for instance, where there is a great deal of sunlight, she usually appears exceedingly real and tangible. The rocks and mountains are very solid, the color is rich and positive, and the light brilliant; there is a spaciousness and largeness of form and line, and a dignity of arrangement, all peculiarly characteristic of the place and suggestive of large canvases. On the other hand, in Eden Park and in the vicinity of Cincinnati generally, while there is much that is very fine indeed in line and form, a very interesting and characteristic feature is the variety of peculiar atmospheric effects in which the smoke, incidental to a great city, plays its part. In fact, wherever I have worked, in Ohio, Colorado or New England, in Italy, Germany, Holland, Northern or Southern France, or the North Sea, the Atlantic or the Mediterranean, each place, like every man we meet, has an individual character.

"As regards the works in the present exhibition, some were done very deliberately and painstakingly, others as swiftly as I could use brush, point or pencil. Some were finished at once, others were gone over twenty or more times. Some are shown because they seemed to have one quality, some because of another, but in each I attempted to express some essential characteristic of the time or place."

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Mr. Meakin's impressions of nature's moods, as recorded in his pictures now on exhibition at the art museum, impress the critic as true ones, judged from the foregoing point of view. They are the true impressionistic pictures, and need no more apology for their being than do the paintings of Corot, Daubigny, Millet or Inness, or any pictures where the artist has drawn his inspiration and motive from nature, and viewing her as a whole, rather than inquiring into her separate parts, so that a beautiful harmony and balance of effect may prevail, has used forms and colors as the poet uses words—for art is a language—to express his conception of abstract beauty and sing his song of gladness or of peace. This soul language of the beauties of nature's varying moods Mr. Meakin has expressed with rare skill.

The grandeur and color of Colorado, the peace and restful quiet of Normandy and the beauty of color of our own Eden Park are all here, and as we walk through the gallery viewing this picture and that, we wander in fancy through sunlit fields, aglow with color, or in the shadow of the mountain, or across marshy meadows, or sit by the

sea and hear it moan, and we feel that nature has rewarded the artist for his ardent wooing of her.

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Mr. Meakin is essentially a lover of nature's moods as reflected in his numerous reproductions of landscapes and marines, but he has a feeling for form and line in figure work, as is evidenced in two or three studies made while abroad. It would require more than one visit to this immense collection to particularize more than has been done here; it is difficult to imbibe the beauties of a picture with the masses surging about you in kaleidoscopic confusion, flitting from one to another in picturesque nervousness of manner, and full of conflicting notions verbally expressed. The attendance has been a distinctively representative one; cultured people whose confidence in Mr Meakin led them to pay this early tribute to his untiring genius.



MOONRISE, WHITEWATER VALLEY. No. 54

## I. BENJAMIN, PHOTOGRAPHER

I saw in Columbus this last summer the finest group of photographs which it has ever been my fortune to look upon. They were six and made a series of character studies which in every respect from choice of subject to their black frames and very arrangement upon the screen showed the thought and taste of an artist. I referred to these somber gems in a recent article, and now, thanks to the kindness of their maker, I am able to offer the entire group to the readers of this magazine.

I. Benjamin is the name signed to them, and I. Benjamin I was glad to meet at that gathering of Ohio's leading photographers. Unlike Clarence White, whose charming compositions I tried recently to celebrate, Mr. Benjamin is a professional photographer—the lead-